



# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## Queen & Ambassador Training - Crowns & Confidence: A Sweet Start to 2025!

The 2025 Watermelon Queen & Ambassador Training officially kicked off in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, with a day full of energy, education, and watermelon pride. The full-day event prepared the new crop of queens and ambassadors to represent the watermelon industry with grace, professionalism, and confidence.

The training began with a spirited welcome and an icebreaker Jeopardy game that quickly set a collaborative and upbeat tone. Dr. Gilbert Miller followed with an in-depth presentation on watermelon production, providing attendees with a foundational understanding of the industry. His session, including a live Q&A on growing practices, offered a unique glimpse into the passion and hard work behind watermelon cultivation.

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## Queen & Ambassador Training Continued

South Carolina Watermelon Association Executive Director and former South Carolina Watermelon Queen **Blakely Atkinson took the stage to share her personal insights on the role of a watermelon queen.** Her talk focused on public speaking, professionalism, and how to embody the values of the title. National Watermelon Queen Elanie Mason then led an engaging etiquette refresher, reminding participants of the importance of poise and protocol when wearing the crown.

In the afternoon, NWPB's **Juliemar Rosado and Stephanie Barlow led a walkthrough of the Watermelon 101 Toolkit**, covering key promotional tools and messaging strategies. Rosado also presented on retail engagement, emphasizing how queens and ambassadors can elevate consumer experiences and drive in-store excitement.

A dynamic session titled "Reaching Consumers" was co-led by Barlow and NWPB's Industry Affairs Manager Andrea Smith. Barlow covered essential social media strategy, outlining NWPB's messaging goals and best practices. **Smith's follow-up presentation on video creation offered practical advice for capturing compelling, authentic content.** From lighting tips to call-to-action strategies, attendees gained the knowledge and skills to amplify their digital presence.

To close the day, queens took part in a Media Coaching and Role-Playing workshop. Through simulated interviews and retail scenarios, they practiced maintaining message discipline and delivering polished, on-brand responses in real-world settings.

The 2025 training event was a powerful start to what promises to be a standout year for U.S. watermelon promotion. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is proud to support this exceptional group of ambassadors as they prepare to share the sweetness of watermelon with communities nationwide.



## MCM Call for Sponsors

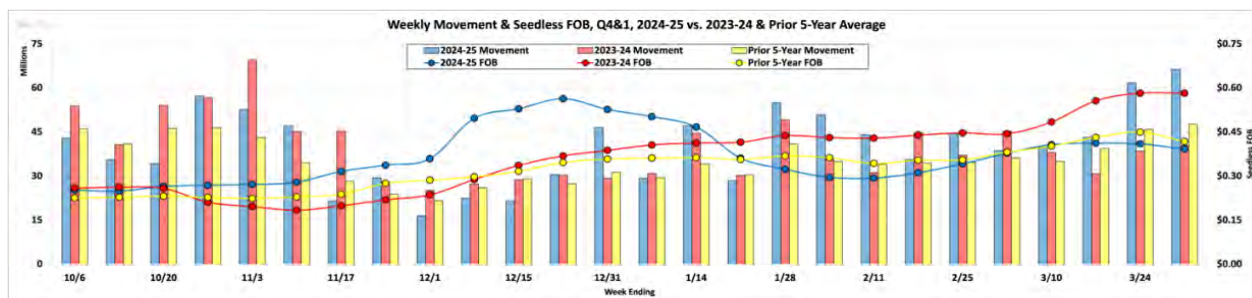


Join the NWPB as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, October 26! Team Watermelon will be out in full force handing out a truckload of fresh watermelon to an estimated 100,000 runners, fans, and families. It's a fun, high-energy day, and this year we're offering sponsorship packages to help your brand be part of the excitement. For more **details about sponsorship packages or custom sponsorship opportunities**, email Stephanie Barlow, Senior Director of Communications at [sbarlow@watermelon.org](mailto:sbarlow@watermelon.org) no later than July 15.






## Fall/Winter Watermelon Volume & Price Analysis



[Click here for larger image](#)

The [Market News portal](#)  hosted by Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) makes it easy to analyze how supply and pricing this year compares to past years. The following charts compare the fourth quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025 to the prior year and five-year average for each. Additionally, we can take a similar look at retail during this time frame using data supplied by Circana.

The blue columns above show weekly movement over the past two quarters, and can be compared to the red or yellow columns showing last year and the prior five-year average, respectively. Color consistency carries over to seedless FOB pricing with the righthand axis showing dollar per pound pricing.

Volume in Q4 2024 totaled 3% higher than average, while Q1 2025 finished over 22% higher than average. Total movement for both quarters came in around 13% above average. Correspondingly, seedless FOBs were up 33% compared to average in Q4, though 2.5% below average in Q1 2025. Combining the quarters shows 2024-25 11.7% above average.

Pounds sold at retail has more or less increased over the past six years cresting at 450 million pounds in 2023-24. In 2024-25, whole pounds were 0.8% below average, while dollar per each was up 23%. Mini pounds were up 1.9% with dollar per each 15% higher than average. Lastly, the cut category was down 3.4% on volume, and up 36% on dollar per pound.



[Click here for larger image](#)

For more information visit the [Supply Chain Research page](#) or reach out to [Jason Hanselman](#) to request custom reports.



## Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Camille Lombardo

**Company:** Pacific Trellis Fruit / Dulcinea Farms

**Time in the Industry:** 19 years — and still learning something new every season!

**Time on the Board:** Since 2023

**What's your favorite thing about Watermelon and the Watermelon Industry?** Watermelon brings people together—at picnics, on road trips, around the kitchen table. I love being part of an industry rooted in joy, nourishment, and connection. It's also incredibly dynamic. From growing in multiple countries to working with retail, there's always a challenge to solve and an opportunity to grow (pun intended!).

**What's your favorite piece of technology?** I'm currently hooked on the Pomodoro timer app—it's simple, but it keeps me laser-focused during busy days.



## Consumer E-Newsletter: What About Watermelon is now The Monthly Slice

Year-over-year, the NWPB email program is one of the **top website-driving platforms**. With this direct-to-consumer tool that is 100% owned and controlled by NWPB i.e., no algorithm to compete with, email remains one of the platforms with highest

potential for ROI and fostering audience loyalty. Along with an increased cadence of delivery, we have the opportunity to optimize our email campaigns as part of a multi-phased plan, beginning with a rebrand. Previously called the *What About Watermelon?* e-newsletter, the refreshed title is now *The Monthly Slice* and is sent to over 18,000 recipients. The header graphic is more aligned with the website and The Slice blog. The content layout is analyzed for peak performers and also allows for consumer-facing national scope spotlights. Additionally, the homepage of Watermelon.org now offers a sign up for the e-newsletter that is **higher prioritized for opt-ins** with a dropdown box to identify a target list of Watermelon Fan (general consumer), Educator, Dietitian or Fitness Professional.





## Watermelon Flesh, Juice & Rind Shine at MKA Collaborative Horizons 2025



Watermelon took center stage at the MKA Collaborative Horizons 2025 event in Kansas City, bringing **fresh flavor and inspiration to foodservice decisionmakers from across the country**. From morning to night, attendees experienced the full potential of watermelon—flesh, juice, and rind—in a variety of creative ways.

The day started with vibrant fresh-cut watermelon. At lunch, guests enjoyed a savory watermelon salad and a Watermelon Cherry Slushee, highlighting watermelon's versatility in both sweet and savory applications. Dinner at Chicken N Pickle featured a standout side—Watermelon Rind Pickles—that sparked conversations about reducing food waste.

**Megan McKenna presented *Watermelon in Foodservice 101*, sharing insights into the growing role of watermelon across menus and meal parts.** But as always, tasting was believing—nothing showcased watermelon's appeal better than experiencing it firsthand. It was a fantastic couple of days of connection, collaboration, and culinary exploration, as operators discovered new ways to incorporate watermelon into their menu.



## Supplier Database – Help Buyers Find Watermelon!

Be a part of nearly **150 companies present - opt in to the Supplier Database!** Each year the Board reaches retail and foodservice buyers through marketing programs and the opt-in only Supplier Database is the resource for retail and foodservice buyers looking for watermelon. In addition to growers and shippers, the Supplier Database is an opportunity for transportation, seed, and bin/carton partners. Visit the Supplier Database at [watermelon.org/supplierdatabase](https://watermelon.org/supplierdatabase) and submit the Database entry form, email [supplierdatabase@watermelon.org](mailto:supplierdatabase@watermelon.org) or call 407-657-0261 for more information.



# The National Retail Merchandising Contest Returns!

NWPB is thrilled to bring back its National Watermelon Merchandising Contest, running **June through August 2025**— again this year, we’re offering over \$10,000 in cash and prizes! Here’s how retailers can enter:

- Build an eye-catching watermelon display in your store
- Share recipes, health tips, and selection advice
- Promote across print, in-store, and digital platforms
- Submit your entry and let your creativity shine!

Top Prizes Include: Grand Prize: \$5,000

Second Place: \$2,500

Third Place: \$1,000

Honorable Mentions (3): \$500 each

Whether you’re a produce pro or marketing guru, this is a retailer’s chance to stand out—and cash in. [Click here to get full contest details and enter!](#)

Let’s make this summer all about bold displays and big wins. Good luck!



## Viva Fresh

NWPB proudly marked its 10th year as an exhibitor at the Viva Fresh Expo, held April 11–12 in Houston and hosted by the Texas International Produce Association (TIPA). **Representing NWPB were Juliemar Rosado alongside NWA’s Promotions Coordinator Kerri Wiggins, and National Watermelon Queen Tori Hobbs.** Throughout the event, the team engaged in valuable networking opportunities and educational seminars, while also spotlighting NWPB’s unique industry resources to over 2,700 attendees, including 485 retail and foodservice buyers.

New to this year’s booth was a flavor pairing sampling experience, allowing attendees to explore watermelon in fresh and innovative ways by pairing cubed watermelon with their choice of chili lime seasoning (Tajin), agave and salt or hot honey. The booth also featured the announcement of the upcoming retail merchandising contest, which drew strong interest, alongside the well-received educational and promotional materials the Board offers. These tools continue to provide vital “Watermelon 101” education, merchandising guidance, and insights into consumer research, handling, and cutting practices.

The NWPB team also had the opportunity to connect directly with industry professionals, gathering valuable feedback and fostering new relationships. With positive energy and strong engagement throughout the expo, the event was a success for all participants and is set to move to San Antonio in 2026.







## NWA Nook – New Investment in Federal Advocacy: NWA Doubles Down on Ag Labor & Policy Reform

The National Watermelon Association is ramping up its efforts in Washington, D.C., with a renewed investment in federal lobbying to advance the priorities that matter most to our members—starting with agricultural labor reform. Partnering with The Redding Firm, NWA is working directly with policymakers to shape the future of ag labor, the Farm Bill, trade, and more.

### ◆ Fighting for Ag Labor Reform

One of our top priorities is improving the H-2A visa program. It's no secret that the current system is costly, bureaucratic, and doesn't support the year-round needs of our growers. Through direct advocacy, NWA is pushing for practical reforms that streamline the process, reduce costs, and provide growers and harvesters with a stable, reliable workforce.

### ◆ Championing Watermelon in the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill offers a vital opportunity to secure support for the watermelon industry on multiple fronts. NWA is advocating for policies that boost federal research funding, ensure watermelons are accurately represented in food safety regulation, and promote the fruit's role in nutrition and wellness programs. By engaging in Farm Bill negotiations, we're working to make sure watermelon remains a priority crop in national agriculture policy.

### ◆ Advocating for Trade & Infrastructure Support

Efficient transportation and fair inspection processes are vital to the success of our supply chain. NWA is speaking up for trade policies and infrastructure that support the movement of watermelon across the country and into export markets.

### ◆ Why It Matters

Your voice is stronger when we work together. NWA's lobbying efforts ensure that lawmakers understand the real-world challenges our industry faces—and that watermelon growers are represented at the highest levels of decision-making.

### Not a Member Yet? Join Today!

Now is the time to stand with the watermelon industry. Membership gives you exclusive access to advocacy updates, industry tools, and opportunities to get involved in shaping policy. Visit [www.watermelon.ag](http://www.watermelon.ag) to join and make your voice count!





## Emerging Chains Highlight Opportunity for Growth – And for Watermelon

As part of the Watermelon Board's annual sponsorship of the Kinetic12 Emergence program, the Q1 2025 report delivers timely insights from decision makers at over 100 emerging and growth restaurant chains (20–500 units). These chains continue to influence broader foodservice trends, and this report sheds light on where suppliers, including the Watermelon Board and industry, can plug in solutions.

### Top Insights from the Q1 Report:

- Traffic and Profitability Lead the List: 70% of operators cite customer traffic and margin optimization as their top priorities. They're actively exploring catering, off-premise strategies, and cold beverage platforms to drive sales—all ideal channels for watermelon innovation.
- Elevating the Guest Experience: Consistency and hospitality are the focus, but operators are also seeking "surprise and delight" moments. Watermelon can deliver just that—whether as a signature ingredient or seasonal special.
- Innovation is More Strategic: With more testing and focus on portable, craveable items, top areas for innovation include beverages, bowls, and spicy or global flavor profiles. Watermelon fits perfectly into all of these spaces—from aguas frescas to chili-lime skewers or plant-forward pairings.
- Supplier Collaboration is Key: Nearly 60% of operators said proactive communication and new ideas from suppliers are what set best-in-class partners apart. The Watermelon Board will **continue to lead with menu ideas, operational insights, and consumer-driven trends**.



### Supplier Expectations

59% of operators state that proactive communication with potential solutions is the type of communication needed from a best-in-class supplier.

As operators look for creative, profitable, and guest-friendly menu solutions, watermelon remains a natural fit—bringing flavor, color, healthfulness, and flexibility across dayparts. The Q1 Emergence report confirms there's room at the table for fresh ideas—and watermelon is ready.



## Watermelon on the Menu

Domingo Restaurant, which serves modern South Texas inspired cuisine and located in San Antonio, currently offers a **Halibut Ceviche with watermelon, lime, cilantro and tomato**.



## Retailer Tool: Brush Up on Watermelon 101 with the Watermelon Learning Lab

Whether you're a seasoned produce professional or new to the category, staying sharp on watermelon best practices can boost your confidence—and your sales. That's where the Watermelon Learning Lab comes in.

This **free, on-demand training tool** is designed specifically for **retailers and produce staff** to help enhance their knowledge and build confidence in the watermelon category. The Watermelon Learning Lab covers essential "Watermelon 101" topics such as:

- Selection and Handling
- Cutting and Storage Best Practices
- Health and Nutrition Information
- Tips for Engaging Shoppers



The modules are short and interactive —perfect for quick learning during the workday or pre-shift huddles. Upon completion, participants can even earn a certificate of achievement. For retailers looking to improve customer service, educate team members, and grow watermelon sales, the Learning Lab is a simple and effective tool to make it happen.

Retailers can start learning today at [www.watermelon.org/retail-education](http://www.watermelon.org/retail-education).

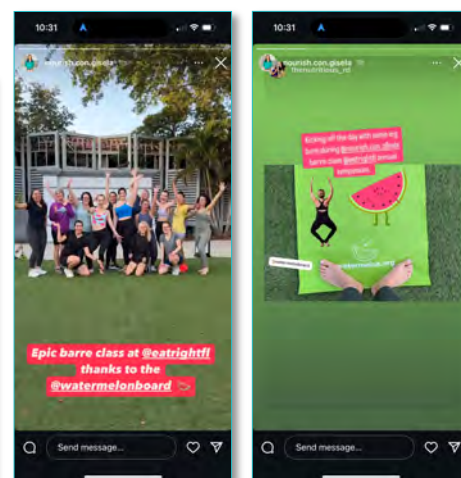


## FAND Event

The Florida Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (FAND) is the state's largest association of dietetic and nutrition professionals who are in the forefront of health and nutrition information and education. The 3,000 plus members touch the lives of all residents and citizens across the State of Florida.

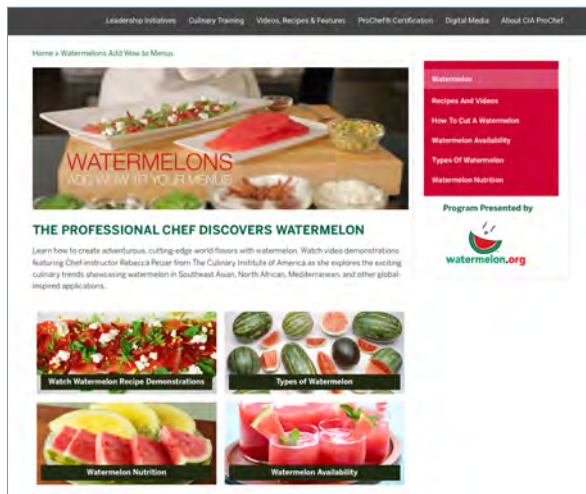
As one of the top watermelon-producing states in the country, educating statewide dietitians about an important local crop on the health

benefits encourages them to in turn recommend watermelon as a vital part of a healthy diet. The annual FAND meeting on April 26th provided a **partnership opportunity** with Gisela Bouvier, RD who taught a fitness class that finished with refreshing watermelon to help fuel their conference of educational sessions for the rest of the weekend. Class attendees were treated to custom Watermelon.org yoga mats and watermelon juice and slices. Gisela and other RD attendees posted social media content to amplify the workout and intersection of watermelon and wellness not just over the weekend but forthcoming in Instagram Reels. Interested in one of our yoga mats for free? Email Stephanie Barlow at [sbarlow@watermelon.org](mailto:sbarlow@watermelon.org).





## Culinary Institute of America Watermelon Campaign Reaches Foodservice Pros Across Digital Platforms



The Watermelon Board's FY 24-25 digital campaign with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) closed the year with strong engagement, showcasing watermelon's versatility to a wide foodservice audience.

### Growing Visibility and Reach

Watermelon video content earned over 111,000 views in FY 24-25, with total program views surpassing 683,000 since launch. CIA's YouTube channel alone delivered more than 11,500 views and 241,800 impressions, contributing to a broader campaign reach of **835,000 impressions this year** and **8.6 million since inception**.

### Premier Digital Placement at the Global Plant-Forward Summit

As Premier Presenting Webcast Sponsor of the 2024 Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit, the Board featured **18 watermelon recipe videos** during the April webcast. The event drove 16,586 views, including nearly 12,000 live, across Vimeo, LinkedIn, and YouTube. The campaign also included prominent logo placement and eblasts to nearly 11,000 foodservice professionals.

### Content Promotion Across CIA Channels

The campaign leveraged CIA's high-traffic platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and targeted newsletters. Posts generated **thousands of views and click-throughs**, engaging chefs and foodservice leaders with fresh culinary inspiration.

### Website Relaunch Boosts Access

The relaunch of CIAProChef.com in June enhanced access to watermelon content, driving over **5,200 unique visits** this year. Improved SEO and mobile design continue to expand visibility for featured videos and recipes.

Through engaging digital storytelling and targeted distribution, the campaign continues to position watermelon as a go-to ingredient for professional culinary innovation.





## CPMA

With the support of ChangeMakers representatives Michelle Gibson and Jinee Lee (pictured, right), NWPB once again exhibited in the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's (CPMA) Annual Convention and Trade Show, held April 8–10 in Montreal, Canada. This premier event **brings together leaders across the fresh produce supply chain**, offering a dynamic platform for business development through education and networking. CPMA consistently draws key decision-makers, category managers, government officials, and other influential figures from across Canada's fresh fruit and vegetable sector.



To generate excitement and boost booth engagement, NWPB featured a lively plinko game, inviting attendees to stop by for a chance to win prizes. The interactive setup attracted a steady stream of visitors, including Canadian retail merchandisers, foodservice professionals, and watermelon category managers. These attendees not only enjoyed the game but also engaged with NWPB's educational materials and discussed year-round promotional opportunities for U.S. watermelon in the Canadian market. Exhibiting at CPMA continues to be a valuable opportunity for NWPB to build relationships with retailers nationwide, encouraging watermelon consumption while reinforcing the goals of our Market Access Programs that support U.S. watermelon exports.

*Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, LEP, etc.) should contact: Juliemar Rosado at [jrosado@watermelon.org](mailto:jrosado@watermelon.org) within three days of event. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*



## “Who is the NWPB?” Video

Dive deeper into the fascinating story of the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) with the newly released bilingual video, presented in both English and Spanish. This engaging resource is now readily accessible in the [industry section of watermelon.org](#).



Going beyond the information currently available in the "About Us" section of the website, this video offers a **comprehensive exploration of the NWPB's journey**. Discover the early beginnings, trace the significant milestones, and witness the evolution over time.

This video serves as a valuable educational tool, particularly for new board members by providing a clear understanding of the NWPB's origins, core purpose, and enduring mission, it will help them quickly integrate and contribute effectively to the NWPB's ongoing success.

So, whether a new or long-time industry member, take a moment to explore this insightful video and gain a richer appreciation for the NWPB's history and impact.



## NWPB Connections

**Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium** – San Antonio, TX – May 4 – 6

**National Restaurant Show** – Chicago, IL – May 17 – 19

**Protective Power of Food Convening** – Washington D.C. – May 27 – 29

**West Coast Produce Expo** – Palm Desert, CA – May 29 & 30

**Australia Melon Conference** – Brisbane, Queensland, Australia – June 4 – 6

